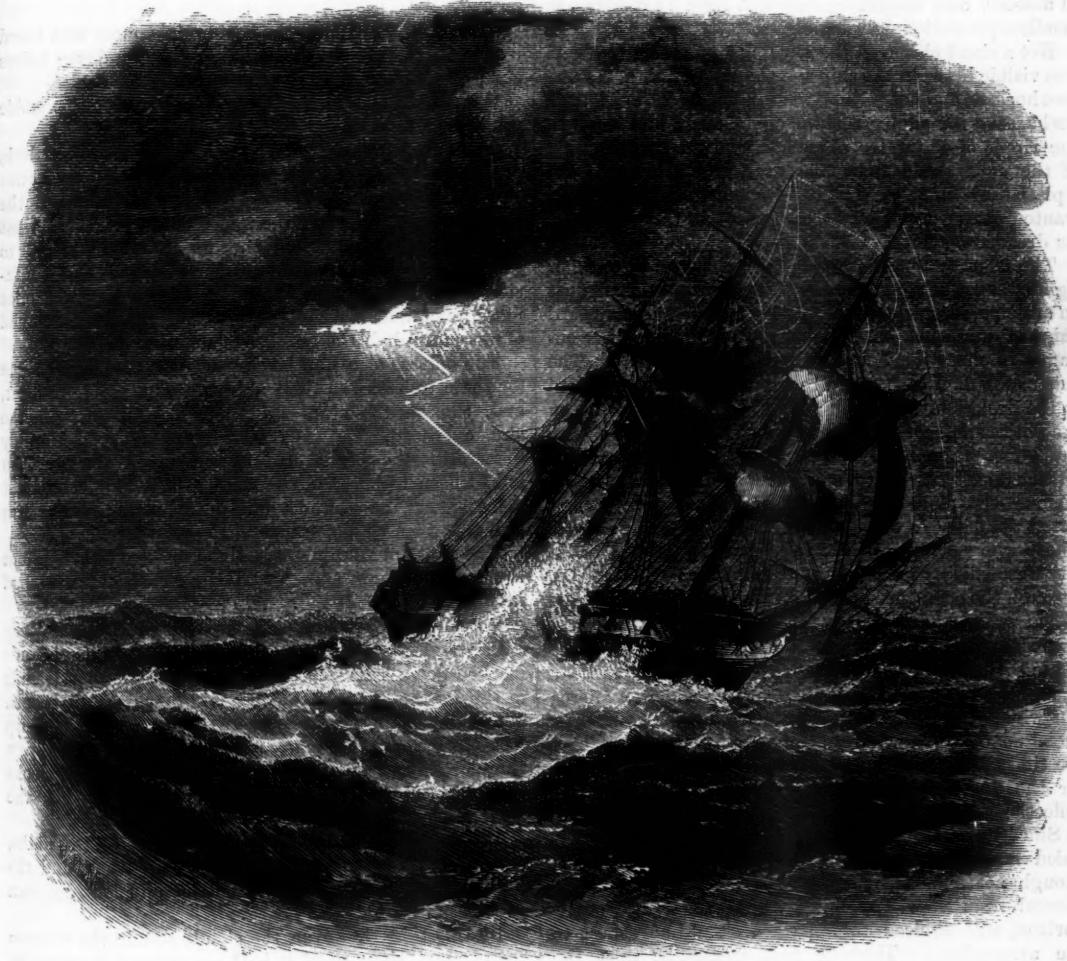


THE LEISURE HOUR.

A FAMILY JOURNAL OF INSTRUCTION AND RECREATION.

"BEHOLD IN THESE WHAT LEISURE HOURS DEMAND,—AMUSEMENT AND TRUE KNOWLEDGE HAND IN HAND."—*Cooper*.



UNDER DOUBLE-REEFED TOPSAILS.

STRANGE SIGNALS.

CHAPTER I.

We had been six weeks at sea from Valparaiso, on a cruise among the innumerable islands of Polynesia. Sometimes we were sailing for days together amid groups of beautiful islands, affording every variety of charming scenery; sometimes "heaving to" off one or another of these islands, and sending the frigate's boats on shore to barter with the natives, exchanging old iron or nails, or clothing, or biscuit, for bread-fruit and other fresh provisions; and sometimes coming to an

anchor for a day or two off one of the larger islands, while officers and men took a run on shore to recruit and refresh themselves, after their long confinement on shipboard. At other times, however, we sailed, for days and days together, over that vast expanse of ocean, without even seeing any sign of land, while day after day we experienced a succession of fine weather, such as the navigators of less favoured seas are little accustomed to; for, though the Pacific Ocean does not—as was supposed by the earlier navigators of its waters—enjoy a perfect immunity from storms and tempests, it being, at certain seasons, subject to squalls which blow with

fearful violence during the short time they last, it is on the whole—at all events within the limits of the tropics—more free from long protracted storms than any other sea.

It was a delightful October night. The day had been excessively sultry, and, but for the fresh breeze that had blown during the hours of daylight, the heat would have been painfully oppressive. Towards nightfall, however, the wind died away; the atmosphere became sensibly cooler; and the moon, nearly at the full, which had risen before darkness set in, shone brightly over the smooth, vast expanse of ocean—appearing, not as it appears in northern regions, like a mere pale yellow circle in the heavens, but like a brilliant ball of flame, floating in mid-air, and imparting sufficient light to render the smallest print distinctly legible.

Not a cloud obscured the sky; not one solitary object was visible between the ship and the surrounding, far-distant horizon, and not a sound was audible from the frigate's decks, save the slight creaking of the spars and cordage, the ripple of the water alongside, and the lazy flapping of the sails against the masts, or, now and then, the “plash” of some fish that had leaped from the water in wanton sportiveness, or to escape from the pursuit of its dreaded enemies.

The frigate's topsails had been double-reefed, and her lighter sails furled, at sunset, not as a precaution against an anticipated gale, but according to custom on board ships of war when on cruising-ground, and neither engaged in chase nor bound to any particular port. The ship's crew had been piped to supper, and had returned to the deck, and were idling about in groups, some on the forecastle, some in the waist, and some between the guns, while nearly all the officers had assembled on the quarter-deck to enjoy the cool of the evening. Among the more than three hundred men who composed the frigate's crew, scarcely a voice was to be heard. Those who conversed spoke in whispers; but the majority were silently gazing over the hammock-nettings, or through the open port-holes, into the sparkling phosphorescent water, and thinking, probably, of their far-distant homes, and of the relations and friends they had left behind them. Sailors are generally regarded as a thoughtless race, and such they may be when on shore; but when they are at sea, there are few men of their social condition more given to dreamy reverie. There are times and seasons at sea when it is hardly possible for the most thoughtlessly inclined to abstain from reflection; and this was one of those times and seasons.

Since the sun had set, a thin, vapoury haze had exhaled from the surface of the heated water, which, though not sufficiently dense to obscure the sky, or to conceal from view any object within the range of the horizon, still sufficed to impart a cloud-like aspect to the atmosphere. Through this gauze-like mist the frigate was noiselessly and slowly gliding, like a phantom ship seeking her way beyond the confines of the material world, into the realm of silence and solitude. It was the season and the hour for serious, melancholy, and yet not gloomy nor unpleasant thought. All labour, except that which was absolutely necessary, was over for the day; and, as the officers and sailors slowly paced the decks, or leaned listlessly gazing over the bulwarks, the expression in the countenances of most among them betrayed the fact that their thoughts were far distant from their present surroundings.

The first watch had long ago been set, and still the men remained on deck. Few cared to go below to their hammocks in the hot stifling 'tween-decks on

so fair a night, and even those who wished to sleep coiled themselves up between the gun-carriages, where the moonbeams could not reach them, and slept away their “watch below” on deck.

It lacked but a minute of midnight. The officer of the deck looked at his watch, paced to and fro once or twice, and looked expectantly towards the captain's cabin, at which the sentry, whose duty it was to report the time, was keeping guard.

Presently the sentry stepped forward to the main-deck, and “struck the bell, eight.”*

There was the usual stir at the sound; those who were dozing roused themselves, and those who were pacing to and fro arrested their steps. The mid-watch was at an end.

The shrill whistle of the boatswain's mate was heard resounding through the ship, and half-a-dozen voices shouted aloud to the sleepers on the lower deck—

“Eight bells there! watch below! Come, tumble up, lads! Tumble up!”

The few sailors who had gone below came on deck, others uncoiled themselves from beneath the guns and other places where they had sought rest; the sentries were relieved; the late “watch on deck” went below to their hammocks; and, for a few minutes, all to the eye of a landsman would have looked like confusion. In a short time, however, everything was once more quiet and orderly, though the decks were thinned of more than half the number of their late occupants.

The officers also now began to think that it was time for them to retire to their cabins. The moon had set, and, though the stars still shone brilliantly in the sky overhead, and the heat-haze had considerably dispersed, the night had grown much darker than it had been hitherto. The wind, which had been light since sunset, had almost died away, and the sky was still free from clouds except in the western horizon.

The captain, who had remained on deck throughout the evening, now approached the lieutenant who had just taken charge of the watch.

“I am going below, Mr. T——,” he said. “Keep a bright look-out; for, though there are no islands marked down hereabouts, there are numerous islands in the Pacific that are not yet laid down on any chart. We might come across one unawares. Keep a sharp look-out for squalls, too. I fancy that we may have a thunder-shower after the heat of the day. It looks very black there to the westward.” With this, the captain turned away and descended to his cabin.

For an hour nothing broke the silence of the night, save the half-hourly stroke of the ship's bell, and the responsive challenges of the sentries and look-out men on deck and aloft.

By this time, however, the cloud-bank in the western horizon had risen until it half overspread the sky; an oppressive closeness had succeeded to the coolness of the earlier portion of the night, and the faint breeze which since dark had hardly sufficed to fill the sails entirely died away. The frigate no longer had steerage way upon her, and at two bells (one o'clock) the third lieutenant, who had charge of the watch, ordered the courses to be hauled up, in anticipation of a sudden squall. It came presently with a vengeance.

The rapidly-spreading clouds had, in less than another

* The “watches” at sea, of four hours' duration each, are regulated by the strokes of the ship's bell—one for every half-hour that passes. Thus, “eight bells” signifies the termination of each watch of four hours, either at noon or midnight, or at four or eight o'clock a.m. or p.m.; while, to prevent the same watches from constantly recurring to the same men, there are two “day watches,” of two hours each, between four and eight o'clock p.m.

quarter of an hour, completely obscured the sky, and rendered the night perfectly dark. Suddenly the black clouds parted, and a vivid flash of lightning burst forth, illuminating the atmosphere, sea, and sky, to the verge of the surrounding horizon, with a dazzling glare of light that for a moment blinded the eyes of all who witnessed it. The flash was instantaneously followed by a deafening peal of thunder, that seemed to shake the ship from her decks to her keelson; and, while it was still rolling, as it were, right above our heads, a violent squall from the westward caught the frigate on the starboard beam, and, notwithstanding the small surface of canvas that was spread, struck her almost on her beam-ends. She righted, however, immediately, and there was a temporary lull, during which a second flash of lightning burst forth, and another peal of thunder caused the planks beneath our feet to vibrate with the shock, while rain began to pour down in torrents.

The frigate, meanwhile, had been put before the wind, and the officer of the watch, after having cast a rapid glance upwards and around, shouted hoarsely—

"Let go the topsail halliards—let go—everything!"

The sails came down with a run, and only just in time. Had there been half a minute's delay, the fearful squall that followed would have filled the canvas, and carried away every mast. As it was, the fore and main topsails, and the mainsail, hanging, as they were, in the bunt, were torn to ribbons, and the frigate, almost under bare poles, was driven through the water with marvellous velocity.

The noise of the thunder, and the violent motion of the ship, woke the captain and first lieutenant, who, together with several other officers, and many of the sailors of the watch below, rushed upon deck to learn what was the matter, all thinking that the vessel had struck upon a reef.

There was, however, nothing to be done under the circumstances—as we fortunately had plenty of sea-room—but to let the frigate run before the wind, and for more than half an hour she continued her rapid course without any perceptible abatement in the violence of the squall. The rain continued to pour down in torrents that flooded the deck as though it had been swept by a heavy sea. The lightning was incessant; fierce flashes darted from the black clouds in zigzag shape, and seemed to hiss through the air, and to threaten us with instantaneous destruction. Sheet-lightning at the same moment ran along the decks, and played around the ironwork, and hovered in balls of fire about the mastsheads, while the thunder rolled in one continuous peal. Several sailors who were standing near the iron-work received violent shocks from the electric fluid, which felled them to the deck, and rendered them temporarily unconscious, though, probably, the heavy rain prevented any more serious accident.

To our excited fancy, it seemed that strange voices were jibbering and mocking above our heads amid the howling of the wind, as though the cave of Cirrha had been opened to let loose the demons of the storm upon us. Thunder-storms within the tropics are usually much more violent than those of more northern or southern latitudes; but never before nor since, even in a hurricane, have I witnessed such a fierce commotion of the elements as we experienced during this squall.

In little more than half an hour, however, the wind gradually died away, and the atmosphere became almost as calm as before; the rain fell more gently, and soon entirely ceased, and, though the thunder and lightning still continued at intervals, the flashes of lightning were less vivid, and the thunder was more distant.

At length the stars once more peeped forth from the sky. The frigate was brought round to her former course. All hands were roused up and sent aloft to repair damages and bend fresh sails, and for a great portion of the watch the ship presented as great a scene of bustle as though she were refitting in hot haste, in one of the royal dockyards.

In course of time, however—and work is done speedily on board a man-of-war—things began to resume their previous aspect. The sailors of the watch below descended to change their wet clothes, and snatch a wink of sleep ere they should be summoned to relieve their shipmates. The various officers of the watch paced the decks as before, and the sailors not on the look-out again settled themselves down for a doze, or a comfortable chat. The mass of dark clouds which had passed over us gradually settled in the north-east, in which direction we could still see the lightning flash, and hear the faint roll of the thunder.

Presently the sentry at the captain's cabin stepped forward and struck six bells (three o'clock, a.m.) The bell had scarcely ceased to vibrate, when, to the surprise of all on deck, there came a sound as of the distant tinkling of a ship's bell in response to our own, from amidst the dark mass of cloud to leeward.

"Hark! Did you hear that?" said the lieutenant to a midshipman who was standing near him.

"I fancied that I heard the sound of a bell, just after that distant clap of thunder," replied the midshipman.

"Did you hear it, quartermaster?" continued the lieutenant.

"Ay, sir, I thowt I heern a ship's bell, just arter the thunder, as Mr. F——says," was the reply of the quartermaster.

"For'ard, there! Did you hear a ship's bell, men?" shouted the officer.

"Yes, sir; we heerd it plain enough," replied one of the sailors; "we were just a sayin', sir, as it must be aboard some ship thereaway to the east'ard, as has catched the squall that's passed over us."

"I suppose it is so," muttered the officer, "though it's strange, with the wind as it is, that we should hear the bell and not see the ship."

"Strange, I can see nothing," he muttered, "though it's thick enough out there. They've got the squall heavy, no doubt."

"On deck there!" cried a topman from aloft.

"Hilloa!" answered the lieutenant.

"Do you see a light there away to leeward, sir, just about like where the bell sounded from?"

"A light? No—yes I do though. There is a light, sure enough. What can it mean? The vessel, whatever she is, has met with an accident in the squall. That light is a signal of distress."

The light was now distinctly visible from the frigate's deck; but it had not the appearance of an ordinary ship's light. It was of a pale yellow colour, and while we were gazing at it and wondering what it could mean, it suddenly vanished, appeared again, as it were, suspended in mid-air, then swung to and fro like a pendulum, and, descending rapidly in the shape of a ball of fire, again disappeared, while at the moment of its disappearance the bell was heard, not sounding regular strokes, as is the custom on shipboard, but ringing a rapid peal, which, though faint, was distinctly audible on the frigate's deck.

Officers and seamen looked wonderingly at each other. Some of the old sailors shook their heads gravely and muttered that the light was not of mortal origin, and

that the bell was not rung by mortal hands. Some serious misfortune was, they predicted, about to befall the frigate. The officers were also puzzled. The matter was as incomprehensible to them as to the sailors.

Again all was silent save the occasional distant roar of the thunder, which gradually became more distinctly audible, as if the storm had made a circuit and was again passing by us to leeward, while the dark, heavy clouds still rested in the eastern horizon.

"Eight bells" (four o'clock a.m.) The mid-watch was at an end. The bell was struck, the watch was called, and the third lieutenant, who had not thought it worth while to disturb the captain for the purpose of acquainting him with the singular phenomena that had been seen and heard on deck, now took the opportunity to make the matter known to him.

"Have you heard or seen anything since three o'clock?" inquired the captain.

"Nothing, sir; but the storm still lingers to leeward."

"Hem! It must have been some ship's bell. The crew have probably met with an accident in the squall and have been making signals of distress. If it be so, we must keep a sharp look-out at day-dawn and bear down to them. How is the wind?"

"Still very light from the westward, sir; in fact, at times it is almost calm," replied the lieutenant; "but, sir," he added, "the light had no appearance of a ship's light, nor even of a blue light let off as a signal of distress. It appeared more like a meteor, and but for the sound of the bell I should have thought it was one."

"Bring my cloak, steward," said the captain. "I will take a turn on deck and see how things look."

As the captain and third lieutenant came up together from the cabin, they met the first lieutenant and the officer of the morning watch coming from the ward-room. A couple of middies were whispering together and gazing to leeward, and several of the sailors were looking earnestly in the same direction. At this moment the leeward horizon was lit up by a flash of lightning, and a peal of thunder was heard—distant, yet nearer than it had been for the last hour.

"The storm seems to be again working round," observed the captain. "The atmosphere appears greatly disturbed. I must look at the barometer when I go below. I hope we are not going to catch a second edition of the squall."

"What are you peering so earnestly at, youngster?" inquired the first lieutenant of one of the midshipmen.

"The light, sir," replied the youth. "There—there it is. Don't you see it, sir?"

There was no need to ask the question, for the light was distinctly visible to every one on deck, flashing forth from that part of the horizon to leeward which had just been illumined by the flash of lightning; now, however, it appeared of a pale blue colour, and danced along in a straight line as if a lantern were being carelessly carried along a ship's deck, and, while every eye was fixed upon it, it shot upwards in a tongue of blue flame and disappeared.

All listened for the bell, but no sound was heard.

"It is a meteor of some description evidently," observed the captain. "Still, it is very strange. I never met with anything of the kind before. But that does not explain the sound of the bell. Are you sure," he continued, addressing himself to the third lieutenant, "that you really heard a bell? Might not your ears have been deceived?"

"I am certain I heard it, sir," was the reply. "If my ears were deceived, so were those of every man in the watch."

"Well, well, we shall soon have daylight," continued the captain. "Quartermaster, take the bearing of the spot where the light appeared as nearly as you can; and, Mr. D—" (to the officer of the morning watch), "look out in that direction as soon as day begins to dawn. If you see a ship, bear down towards her, and let me know immediately."

All on deck looked out for the appearance of the light again, but everything in that quarter of the heavens remained in deep obscurity.

"Hoist a lantern to the mizen-gaff-end," said the captain. "If the light did come from the ship, they will answer us."

A lantern was accordingly hoisted aloft, but no answering light appeared. A blue light was then burnt with the same result, and, as all remained in darkness to leeward, and as the thunderstorm which had threatened again to work round to windward now appeared to be passing away altogether, the captain and others whose curiosity had brought them or kept them on deck went below, and left the decks to the morning watch.

Day dawned shortly before six o'clock, and scarcely had the sky begun to brighten in the east when one of the men on the look-out aloft raised the unexpected shout of

"Land ho!"

ERRORS OF THE PRESS.

THERE is a certain mistrust, characterised by a feeling of soreness, generally existing between the professional writer for the press and the printer. It does not amount to much, and it is somewhat less in the present day than it was in the last generation, because printers print better than they did thirty or forty years ago, and writers are less careless than they were at that date. Still, the mutual misgiving is entertained, and is kept alive by the recurrence, more or less frequent, of "errors of the press," which the writer invariably attributes to the printer, and the printer does all he can to lay it to the credit of the writer.* There are faults, however, on both sides, though, if we were called upon to decide where lies the preponderance of blame, we should feel bound greatly to exonerate the printer, who is rarely chargeable with more than a tithe of the blunders placed to his account—we are speaking, of course, of printers who are printers, and not of the mere proprietors of types and presses, of whom there are too many who have no adequate notion of the printer's function.

Errors of the press occur to a much larger extent than the reading public is generally aware of, and may even be perpetuated through one edition after another for centuries, until the blunder, or the wrong reading, has altogether displaced the right reading, which, through lapse of time and changes in the signification of words, becomes altogether lost. Commentators know how true this is, and how hopeless is the search after truth in such cases; of the wild conjectures sometimes hazarded in this search, some of the modern and so-called amended editions of Shakespeare furnish striking examples.

In noticing the various kinds of errors, we may begin with those which are merely verbal, and which, for the most part, are due to the writers, who are apt not only to write illegibly, but to read their proofs carelessly, and

* An amusing instance lately occurred in connection with the Jamaica prosecutions. Mr. Stephen was made to say in the "Times" that he treated Mr. Eyre as he had often treated *obscene* and uninteresting criminals. Every one saw this was a misprint for *obscure*, but the printer or editor persisted in stating that the error was in the manuscript.

leave errors standing which they ought to correct. Such verbal blunders are at times ludicrous enough, as when a writer, intending to speak of Cato and Brutus, is made to speak of cats and brutes; or another, as happened the other day, announces the publication of a new work "in the form of a five-shilling elephant," meaning "a five-shilling pamphlet."

A long list of blunders of this kind might be enumerated, and not a few of them have become stock jokes, or material for jokes, in the printing-office. Some of these are "full-blown noses," instead of "full-blown roses;" "he arose and shook off his ears," instead of "shook off his fears;" "horse literature," instead of "Norse literature;" "syllabub," instead of "syllabus;" "omelet," instead of "amulet," with not a few which, current in the printing-office, need not circulate beyond it. Many of the verbal errors are of a kind which will escape the ken of the most watchful reader; because, though they weaken or pervert the sense of the author, they do not destroy it. Thus, "distraction" is often printed "destruction," and *vice versa*; "haven" is sometimes printed "heaven," and we can recall a critique on a picture in which the painter was blamed for his "violet colour," instead of his "violent colour." Again, there are verbal errors, for which accident alone is to blame; thus, in a costly edition of Moore's poems, one of the verses begins "A sense makes the heart grow fonder," the *b* in absence having dropped out of the printer's form between the final reading and the working off. A similar accident accounts for "old fowl," instead of "cold fowl," in the carte of a dining-house in the city.

As samples of errors clearly due to bad writing we may mention one or two. During the war with Russia an announcement in a Government blue-book, stating that "our troops had marched across Belbec and drawn up in front of the north ports," declared in its first shape that the troops "had marched across the Baltic and drawn up in front of the North Foreland." In another blue-book a gentleman who subscribed himself as "solicitor to the House of Commons" was made to figure as one who "jobs about the House of Commons." A quotation of a rather racy kind being ascribed to Saint Lucius, the printer's reader, doubting its saintly origin, and knowing no saint of that name, was induced to make researches, which resulted in the discovery that the words belonged to Sir Lucius O'Trigger, one of the bright stars of Sheridan's comedy of "The Rivals."

Oddly enough, there are instances in which verbal errors have a trade value, inasmuch as they serve to identify first impressions of engravings or particular editions of books. Hogarth appears to have been a little loose in his orthography, in which, by the way, he was not at all singular in his day. When he first published his print of the "March to Finchley," he dedicated it to George II; but that royal booby took offence at the innocent satire, and would, had he dared, have visited the painter with his wrath. Hogarth made haste to obliterate the king's name, and insert that of the King of Prussia. In so doing he spelled Prussia with one *s* (Prusia), and worked off some fifty copies from the plate before the error was pointed out to him. Then he corrected it, and the marks of the correction are traceable on all the subsequent impressions. But the first impressions were of course the best, being taken before the plate was worn; they have been recognised as such ever since, and to this day an impression of that plate on which the word Prussia is wrongly spelled is worth in the market as much as half-a-dozen of the others, however excellent they may be. Another instance, well known to bibliophiles, is that of Littleton's Latin

Dictionary. When the doctor was printing this huge quarto, he was intensely bothered with the printers, and had to be constantly going to the office to superintend their work. One day, when he happened to be specially badgered, a compositor came to him as he was talking to the proprietor, and, thrusting a slip of copy under his nose, drew his attention to the word *Condono*, to which no English word had been appended, asking at the same time how he should fill the blank. "Get away with you!" cried the doctor, in a pet; "condog you, be off!" The compositor went off, and coolly completed the line thus, "*Condono*, v. a. to condog." This remarkable performance was never challenged by the readers of the proofs, but went to press without alteration. Ever since, that edition of the Dictionary has been known among collectors as the "Condog edition," and for a time bore an extra value, as it was sought after by the curious.

One fruitful source of errors are proper names. There are certain names which seem obstinately determined not to get themselves properly spelled. The oldest of them, and therefore the one entitled to precedence, is Pharaoh, whose last and penultimate vowel are for ever changing places, and that in the same article and even in the same page. Another is Shakespear, who figures as Shakspear, Shakspere, Shakespeare, Shakespere, and Shakspere, and we know not in how many other forms. Burghley, again, is as often Burleigh, and sometimes Burley, while his patronymic Cecil has been written variously Cicil, Cycyl, Syssel, Seisel, Seycil, Sicell, Sitsill, though some of these forms, it must be confessed, date farther back than the art of printing or settled systems of spelling. One would think that Göthe, who is so much quoted and talked about, to whatever extent he may be read, would be spelled correctly, but men of mark in the literary world will yet persist in writing and printing Göethe, and Gothe. The most notable of all names in this respect, however, is Broddingnag, which all the London printers have seemingly conspired to rob of the *n* in the second syllable: there is no getting them to relen tin this particular, do what you will. Spite of Swift "and all his works," they will have it Brobdignag, and Brobdignag it seems destined to be to the end of the chapter. Among other instances of words in which a letter is almost invariably dropped are ophthalmic for ophthalmic, and Melanchthon for Melanchthon.

Errors often occur and pass unnoticed in head-lines, from causes which ordinary readers would never suspect. One cause is the deceptive effect of capitals on the eye that dwells for any length of time on them. If the reader will take up a book in which the same words in capitals stand at the head of the page throughout, and read them off at his usual rate, he may find that by the time he has reached the hundredth page it does not matter to him how the words are spelled—the letters have in a manner dropped their function, and he will need to pause a little to recover an intelligent notion of what he is about. Another cause is, that head-lines are apt to get "picked," as the term is, in the printing-office—that is, the letters in one sheet are taken out temporarily to supply blanks in another, and, when restored, occasionally slip into the wrong place.

A curious source of error in the printing-office, though it is rarely productive of mischief, is one that is purely technical. Some time back a proof was sent to the writer with a query directing his attention to a note at the foot of a page, to which note there was no reference in the text. The proof was a sheet of a scientific work of a deceased author, with annotations and additions by

a gentleman who, since completing them for the publisher, had sailed for the East. The words of the suspected note were "Ferguson ends here." Now, Ferguson, the astronomer, had been spoken of in the preceding pages, but what was meant by this odd allusion to him our friend had not the remotest idea. To us the case was plain enough: we saw at once that one of the compositors employed on the work, was also named Ferguson; that he had finished his "taking," or portion of copy that fell to his share, at the foot of that page, and had made a brief memorandum to that effect, in order to show how much of the work was his. The compositor who had set the notes and "made up" the matter into pages had mistaken this entry for an editor's note, and had treated it accordingly, and hence the publisher's perplexity.

A very common error of the press, and one frequently encountered in the three-volume novels with which the reading world is so plenteously pampered just now, is the misplacement of a line, or the exchange of places between two or more lines, occurring, for the most part, at the head or the foot of the page. If the causes of such errors were investigated, they would invariably be traced to alterations, or after-thoughts, on the part of the author or the publisher, involving some material changes in arrangement, and to the haste and hurry with which such changes had to be made. Voluminous corrections are a constant source of blundering; and no writer who rearranges his matter after it has been once made up should think of sending it to press without careful examination, however diligently it has been read before. Owing to the neglect of this precaution, one sometimes sees whole paragraphs transposed, the running head-lines on one page referring to the matter in another, notes at the foot of a page or pages to which they do not belong, and periods in the text that break off suddenly without coming to a conclusion.

Some dozen years ago, or more, there were to be found on the book-stalls of London a bulky one-volume edition of Rollin's "Ancient History," one copy of which fell to our share at the cost of a very few shillings. The reason of its selling at so low a price became apparent on examination. In several of the sheets the pages did not follow each other consecutively; thus it might be that, after reading to the bottom of page 410, you came on page 415, then on page 420, and so on: the whole of the matter was there, but a good portion of it in the wrong place. This was due to the blundering of the man (he could hardly have been a compositor) who "imposed" the forms—that is, who arranged the pages, and did his work without understanding it. In ordinary circumstances this could not have happened, because the printer's reader could not fail to discover so outrageous a blunder; but in this instance there was evidently no reader concerned in the business. The work had been printed from stereotyped plates which had been bought by some speculator, who had gone heedlessly to work with them, with the above unfortunate result.

Apropos of stereotyped plates, it was thought, and great boast was made of it, when stereotyping first came up, that by this process of transforming, in a manner, the moveable types into one solid plate, errors of the press would be done away with, and lasting correctness insured. Publishers who stereotyped invariably proclaimed that fact on their title-pages, and the words "stereotyped edition" were regarded as a guarantee for accuracy. Never was there a greater delusion, though many years elapsed before the delusion was exposed. It was found that stereotyping perpetuated blunders, and that the difficulty of correcting the plates was far greater

than that of altering the moveable types. It was found, also, that the plates were so liable to accident and slight fractures in working that the maintenance of perfect accuracy, in even a single sheet, was the exception, and not the rule. At first all important works were stereotyped, notably Bibles, lexicons, commentaries, and the Greek and Roman and English classics, while works of a lighter kind were printed from the type. The experience of years has led to a complete reversal of the rule. If publishers stereotype now, they never state that fact on their title-pages. The Bible printers find it more politic to keep the whole Bible standing in type, serious as is the expense, than to stereotype it; and all works of an important class are now printed from the type. At the same time stereotyping abounds more than ever, and is one of the chief means by which our low-priced literature is so widely diffused. All the penny periodicals are stereotyped, so are nearly all our daily, and several of our weekly newspapers; and so essential has the process become to the rapid and wide diffusion of the popular literature, that without it fully one half of the circulation of our most popular journals and serials would have to be given up.

There was a time when correctness in printing was held in far higher estimation than it is at the present day. The Elzevirs, it is said, affixed their proof-sheets to the doors of the colleges and universities, and offered a golden premium for the discovery of an error, however trifling. The Dutch, the French, the Italians employed as printers' readers professors and philologists of the highest standing, and some of their printers would cancel a sheet for the sake of the slightest flaw, or even suppress an entire volume rather than give currency to inaccurate work. We have altered all that: we have improved our technical processes to a degree of perfection inconceivable by the old printers; but we have thrust the scholar out of the printing-office, and have cast the responsibility of correctness, in so far as scholarship is concerned, upon the author, who, sooth to say, is apt to be exceedingly remiss where, in justice to himself, he should exercise the greatest care.

ON THE NILE.

CHAPTER XVI.—IN THE BORDER LAND.

"Where rippling wave and dashing oar
That midnight chant attend,
Or whispering palm-leaves from the shore
With midnight silence blend."

THERE is a long date-grove that skirts the eastern shore of the Nile below Syene—a very king of all groves for its regal beauty—in whose golden twilight lie embowered at least a dozen villages. We lingered here one sunset evening, dreamily listening to the vespers of the palms, to the chime of the distant sakias, and to the murmur of the great river, when, as quick night stole upon us, we were taken unawares and lost our way. Our dahabeyah was anchored in mid-stream. That we knew: we could see it from the bank. But where was the felucca? We had left it in a little bay, under some clustering mimosas, which, arching overhead, had hollowed a nook, safe—so we thought—for a hiding-place. But we had wandered far since then, allured into the depths of that luxuriant wood, and now, as star after star peeped down through its interlacing greenery, we strayed hither and thither, unable to light upon what we had hidden so deftly.

We got late home that night. Indeed, had not Said been with us, we had been fain to pillow our heads among the palms. After a long, fruitless search, Smith

observed that we had better look out for a convent to sleep in. We knew there was a convent near, in a rocky nook half way up the hill; for, from the verge of the wood, we had seen it. We had noticed the scarped crags, the rough cross daubed on a salient angle of wall, and the few perilous steps, cut at intervals, from ledge to ledge, to facilitate the descent of the brethren to the plain. The Professor, however, opined that we should break our necks if we attempted it. Besides, a convent of Copts among these hills is a very different kind of thing from what one naturally dreams of who has remembrances of Italian and Levantine convents in his mind. The Latins and Greeks have some notion of comfort, more or less feeble. They sleep in beds. Whereas these Copts have positively none; and they care no more for morning ablutions than an enraged cabman for the elegancies of speech. We had already gone through some experience in the matter of these convents, which I must relate.

One day, in wandering about the desert hills near Manfalout, we saw what appeared to be masonry in a cleft on the face

"Of some tall cliff that reared its haughty form"

up from a deep ravine. It was manifestly the work of man. We could just distinguish a rope pendent from a ledge of rock—a very usual method of ingress to these fortress-like Eastern monasteries. Could aught human inhabit that awful solitude? Smith, with characteristic impetuosity, instantly climbed up to see. Presently we heard the faint tones of his voice crying "Come up, come up," and saw him gesticulating wildly on the crags overhead. It appeared that he had toiled as far as the dizzy ledge where the rope hung; that, seeing it was knotted and looked tempting, he had scrambled up it sailor-fashion, and landed himself in a kind of rough vestibule to a natural cavern of some depth. Thence, not having encountered a living soul, he was about to penetrate further, when the deep sound as of voices in a solemn chant vibrated through the hollows of that strange abode. So, being—well, not frightened exactly, but rather astonished, he had made the best of his way back to induce us to follow. We went. We watched each other's gymnastics upon that knotted rope, steadied by footholds cut in the rock. We got into a natural rent in the cliff, where our further progress was barred by a heavy door; and there, knocking clamorously, we were at length admitted.

Four Coptic monks came to our appeal, and wildly stared over each other's shoulders at us through the half-opened door. Most courteously, however, they received us; indeed, the foremost was about to embrace Smith on the cheek in token of Christian fellowship, but our friend was bashful. They led us over their convent; for the greater part it was constructed in the mountain. A small tower on a jutting crag, a rough bridge of palm trunks spanning a deep rift, to where, on an adjacent ledge, a little artificial garden had been made with earth brought up from the plain, were all the outworks. The rest was caverned in the rock. In that eagle's eyrie we were shown through loopholed corridors, dark stairways, chambers; but I must say that, save the chapel, which was both artistic and clean, they were more like dens of wild beasts than the habitation of human beings.

We interrupted the other monks in their favourite lounge, a natural balcony close to the chapel, where a broad rough-hewn loophole in the rock framed a magnificent view across the valley of the grandly-rolling river and of the Lybian mountains in the west. Six of the brethren—handsome-looking fellows, black-robed and

turbaned—were there lying full sprawl, smoking chiboukes with much lazy satisfaction. They jumped up at seeing us, gathered around, and, after due passage of salutation, began to examine our outlandish costume. They exhibited considerable curiosity. One pulled off the Professor's necktie, and was then anxious to be told what his collar was for. Our friend unbuttoned his "all-rounder" and handed it about for inspection. One after another passed it in review, turned it over, examined it as gravely as if it had been the celebrated fragment of Saint Eanswith's nightcap, or a ruffle of the immortal Bottom's. After that the brethren became much interested in the bronze buttons of my shooting-jacket, on which sportsmen were loading guns in alto-relievo. Of course there was nothing for it but to cut them off and distribute them fairly as far as they would go. They may perhaps pass down to posterity as pious relics—who knows! But that which puzzled our turbaned friends the most was Smith's braces! Being hot, he had cast off his coat, and these contrivances (worked by fair fingers now far away) were openly manifest. What were they for? One brother after another put forth his hand and tenderly stroked them, stooped and examined them, stretched them, let them fly. "Braces! did all of us wear braces? What a singular habit! was it a charm against the evil eye?"

When this admiration had cooled down, we went into the chapel. It was constructed in the jaws of the cavern—floor and roof of the live rock. The edge was bricked in by a wall, breast high. You looked over it down a sheer fall of two hundred feet upon jagged rocks. Your brain reeled with the effort; in fact, the whole place was on a beetling crag, and would have stood out against a siege. All the light came through that opening in the chapel. The western sun, flaming across the broad valley beneath, poured into the cavern and lit up that sanctuary with a strange and golden light. It was built with fretted woodwork screens reaching half way to the rocky roof—a kind of rectangular pen in which a few seats or stalls were distributed round a carved sycamore lectern. The brethren crowded about this to show us a thick volume of liturgies in ms. Coptic that lay there. We took it to be of the twelfth century—about the date probably of this queer convent of the cliff. Our friends intoned a part of the service for our special edification. Probably not one of them understood the language. The chapel was bare of furniture. Two or three lamps hung from the scarred and blackened rock ceiling, fastened by running cords noosed to hooks in the wall, and in a deep niche or sanctum hollowed out of the live rock a little silver lamp twinkled over the wooden communion table. Through the gap left between screen and roof, and through the beautiful fretwork in the former, the sun struggled past into the black recesses of the cavern, but it lost itself there. We could not see to the end. We were led also to a cave which seemed a kind of lumber-room for old vestments and crosses. We turned out heaps of such millinery, among it some curious banners and an illuminated ms. or two. They showed us the refectory, a cozy little loopholed chamber looking down a dreadful precipice. "But where do you sleep?" we finally asked: "where are your beds?" "Beds?" and the brethren looked at one another inquiringly: "beds? Ah, yes! Well, you know, we sleep anywhere—in the chapel, in the cavern, as the fit takes us."

And so we bade them adieu.

It will readily be seen, then, why we benighted travellers lost in that deep palm wood, where now the crescent moon in chequered lights and shade was struggling in, set aside Smith's proposition as untenable. Better

light a watch-fire of sticks, and pillow one's head upon a stone, than toil up that perilous ascent for the chance delights of a convent shelter; better—"Hold, I have an idea," interrupted Smith, irrepressible with the possession of such unwonted wealth: "perhaps some of these

commotion. Men were chattering indignantly, women were scolding, boys and girls, newly awakened, were rubbing their eyes and rather enjoying the fun. The village was not so large, nor the houses so private, but what everybody could talk at once to everybody else. Which



SCENE.

villagers can lead us to the felucca. I know one woman was looking on when we landed."

"Rather a bright suggestion that," said the Professor; "but it is a shame to wake them up. However, let us send Saïd to see." So we despatched the urchin and followed gently in his rear.

How serenely slept the moonlight on that little border village before us, dotted in among the palms! How breathlessly it was reposing! Patches of light, patches of shade, from the openings of the boughs above, fell softly and transfigured the rustic hamlet into a realm of fairy-land. Never, so you might have thought, never had the stern travail of this lower life or its conflicting cares ruffled the dwellers in that peaceful wood. It was like an enchanted scene, something that owned no fellowship with this world of unrest, that led your thoughts away, far off into regions of calm—a scene which such as are unfamiliar with the glories of African nights and tropic landscapes must enjoy only in imagination.

Sending this young Arab into a sleeping village on such an errand was much like introducing a ferret into a rabbit warren. You might as well have tried to stop an unleashed hound in full sight of its prey as to have kept Saïd within bounds in a matter of this sort. There was no end to his bounce; he was a pasha, a dozen pashas. And as for these Egyptian fellahs, why, he took the same view of them as a shepherd's dog takes of the sheep who attempt to evade his authority and nibble at a forbidden knoll. Thus it came to pass that when we approached we found the whole place in

they did; for the low mud walls of each domicile bristled with heads, sleepy enough, but animated with wagging tongues and flashing eyes. Saïd had got into a wasp's nest, we thought. Yet we could distinguish him in the tumult, dodging about from house to house, and tumbling recklessly into each domestic circle in his search for the girl who had seen us land. Some came out of their doors and threatened him. One exasperated old woman, frightful as Atropos, stretched out her skinny arms and followed him about, uttering incoherent cries like an enraged Pythoness. He had stumbled over her prostrate body and fallen into the bosom of her family, thereby waking all the children. Of course we were unable to apologize or make ourselves understood in any way. We were beginning to fancy we might get into a scrape, for a troop of stalwart men gathered about us, whose looks unmistakably indicated that they considered our intrusion inopportune. It was not a pleasant position, and we felt guilty. These border people, too, carry daggers on their arms—a rough blade in a leathern sheath, a kind of armlet ornamental enough, but not just then reassuring.

"This comes of staying out late," said the Professor.

"Well, that's a safe conclusion, I reckon," rejoined our other friend; "but it's not to the point just now. What shall we do? That's the question. These fellows don't look amiable."

We were standing with our backs against a wall, and a palm overhead was flickering the moonlight on the faces of the dusky squad before us.

"Have you any tobacco?" I asked of Smith. "Plenty." "And lucifers?" "Yes." "Then let us all light up; it will act as a diversion to the enemy."

This was a fair stroke of policy, for it raised a genuine laugh, thereby displaying in strong light our coolness and utter indifference—signs of a hidden strength, which

sleeping on the deck. One here and there, as we climbed the bulwarks, started up, but in a moment or two all had sunk back into repose. The rippling of the water at the prow alone broke the stillness of the night.

I have spoken of this as the border land, for that it is almost within hail of the Cataract, where Egypt and



THE ISLAND OF ELEPHANTA.

impose immensely on Easterns. Furthermore, smoking being contagious, one and another scenting the fragrance of the glowing weed became conscious of a sympathetic feeling, an inner craving to partake in the joy. Chiboukes appeared as if by magic, and Smith, who had a large pouch full of tobacco, instantly bethought him of distributing it right and left. Latakia is *bonne bouche* not to be put aside. Eagerly each dusky villager darted forward to claim his share, and, when a whole box of matches was added for mutual division, the effect was complete—the enemy's flank was turned, he was routed.

Said, who during this had been out of call, now came up, followed by some women, one of whom, he said, could lead us to the felucca; it was half a mile away, but they all wanted backsheesh. Backsheesh we promised to give them, but not until we were fairly in the boat, for the jingle of money in that primitive place would have brought down the whole village upon us like kites upon carrion; we should have barely escaped with our skin.

So we bade adieu to the villagers, standing grim against the background of their moonlit village, and, turning, followed our fair guide through the tangled wood above the river shore. The moon was low in the sky, and its reflection in the sluggish water glinted through the trees as we passed on. A dozen clamorous women were dancing in our wake—strange hooded shapes flitting among the shadows; their loud jarring voices in wild chorus rung weirdly through that silent grove. It was like some Bacchic measure, strophe and antistrophe, and echo, amid the stillness of the night, repeated it from the rocks across the stream, mingled with the murmur of the current eddying and lapping at the shore. Sure enough our boat was where we left it, hidden in its nook by the underwood. We found it safe, oars and all, and, after satisfying these daughters of the palm forest with backsheesh, we rowed off, under the midnight heaven, to our floating home. The crew were

Nubia join. Not only do the inhabitants of this region resemble Nubians in form and feature, but the aspect of the country too has undergone a marvellous approximation to the abrupt and rugged character of Nubian scenery. The mountains, which press in and curtail the already narrow margin of land, are bolder and ruddier than those already passed. They are of sandstone too, various in tint and stratification, and big boulders of red granite already crop up—scattered outworks of that vast granite formation whose centre is Syene. Out of Syene's famous quarries (whence the word Syenite) were dug those giant obelisks and colossi that men still marvel



MANNER OF CROSSING THE RIVER IN NUBIA.

at, some of the smallest of which have travelled northward, e.g., the obelisk of the Concorde and those of Rome.

We made bold to linger in this pleasant land; somehow we felt at home there. Slowly, day by day, we crept up the last reach of the river, shore-girt with all that an unclouded sun can engender in a Nilotic soil of beauty. We wandered abroad, first in the palm-groves—we made ourselves acquainted with the village life therein; then in the narrow outlying strip, laboured into complex fertility; we wandered abroad in the mountain; and, finally, found ourselves in an island of surpassing loveliness—Elephanta—that lies at the foot of the Cataract. Indeed, who would not be loath to leave a region so eloquent of peace and repose, so free from agitating cares and worries of daily life?

Nothing could exceed the beauty of those palms. Ten, twelve, fifteen stems sprouting through an undergrowth of spiky leaves soared up lightly from one parent root. Far overhead their plumy crests intermingled and wove a tangled pattern of delicate design on the splendour of the dark blue sky. The home of the feathered folk was there—doves, hoopoes, pigeons. From three to five hundred pounds of dates, so it seems, are harvested from the crimson pendent clusters of one palm. The peasants are rich in dates. They pack them in jars, and ship them down the river. They are thrifty in other matters, too. Look at them tending their garden-like plots of corn, castor-oil, cotton, lentils; it reminds you of the first of all gardens and its primitive husbandry. Each plot is a kind of depressed parallelogram, engirt with little raised dykes flowing from the sakias. The man goes from one thirsty plot to another, tapping the channels by indenting the mud with his foot;* so the water floods the bed until the sluice is again closed.

In the villages I used to find nothing but women and children; the male population was gone afield. Spinning was the order of the day, and minding babies. I had a rage at that time for collecting spindles. I used to waylay boys and girls, or lurk in some cool quivering shade, and watch them twisting the little wooden machines—the identical spindle of old Egypt—by the thumb and forefinger, or rolling them down the thigh for greater velocity. The wool, or camel hair, or cotton, is held in the hand. But my best specimens were got from girls who kept goats, who roamed about with them in wild places on the desert's brink for pasture—thrifty peasants' daughters, graceful as their native palms. These wander out under the fair heavens all the summer's day, loiter and spin to beguile the time, and at evening, when the crimson mists gather in the west, trip homewards with their flocks. Impudent kids follow with them that nibble at forbidden dainties by the wayside; and bearded, hook-nosed goats, ready to butt at anything or anybody out of sheer wantonness of spirit, frisk waywardly along in the deepening glow to be folded for the night.

It was not always easy to approach these Arcadian shepherdesses. One needed to be circumspect. They usually took me for a robber—a wolf come to carry off one of the flock. They would start and tremble, and snatch furtive glances over the shoulder as they drove their goats hastily away. My manner was to hold a penny prominently forward, approach gently—as you would do in salting a bird's tail—and point with emphatic gesture, first at the spindle, then at the coin. It sometimes succeeded—indeed, I have a good collection of these souvenirs. In which case I gained a fair chance of showing that I was tame, and of examining, even handling, the finery in which these little dandified maidens

were decked. Not that they had much dress to boast of, but they made up for it in beads and bangles. Necklaces (passionately prized) strung at random, festooned on each other, bracelets of primitive artifice, anklets of ivory or brass (they grow too small to be removed), head ornaments—a kind of tassel, fashioned like the strings of a cardinal's hat, of bits of amber, glass beads, and crimson seeds—wreathed in among the little short plaits of hair to dangle below the ears—these are embellishments enthusiastically affected, and held to be more important than dress. Feminine vanity, you see, crops up even in the border land. But, spite of this barbaric splendour, a pretty modesty, innate and artless, characterises the address of these dusky-skinned little damsels—a modesty all unconscious; no downcast glances or drooping eyelids or simpering gait, but a clear, innocent look full into your eyes. Ay, and the same of their elder sisters, too; for the women of this upper country contrast nobly with their veiled compatriots of Lower Egypt. Still there is a world of native archness lurking in their clear comely countenances. It beams out of two big black eyes at you (if so be they have got over their first fear), and suggests—what, alas! speech is sure immediately to echo—backsheesh! The first impulse at sight of a stranger is always backsheesh—very disappointing truly. However, I found it useful sometimes. It broke the ice, and helped me in negotiating for gewgaws and ornaments.

Frequently I was fortunate in finding things of value strung on with beads and other modern nick-nacks to necklaces that I bought; namely, antiqued up from the soil. I came, one sultry noon, upon a girl gorgeously bedizened, seated in the green filmy shadow of an ancient sycamore—a young mother, perhaps, for a chubby baby lay grubbing in the dust at her feet. She was leaning against the trunk quite self-absorbed, spinning, and quavering a song so heartily as to be heedless of my step. It was one of those songs which are as characteristic of these people as the “jug-jug” is of the nightingale—a plaintive wail, not melodious, but wild as the surges of the distant sea; a primeval music that somehow colours the landscape with melancholy. A few of these songs you can catch and write down (and beautiful they are), but the rest of them are fickle minors, fugitive as the desert winds that sigh and moan through the clefts and gorges of the barren waste.

“What a splendid necklace she has on!” thought I, and I began immediately to covet it. The song ceased, for at sight of me she snatched up her baby for flight. I made a quick supplicating gesture, and she stayed, but stayed as one half fearful. Then, in very gentle pantomime, eked out with a blundering vocabulary, I told my wish. I bought her spindle without difficulty. She parted with it so easily that I felt emboldened to bid point-blank for the necklace. I took out a handful of coppers—less than two shillings’-worth—in *kamsas* or farthing pieces, and held them in the palm of my hand, jingling them pleasantly. It was a seductive sound. I question whether she had ever seen so much money before. She drew near at the attraction, not, however, to let me examine the necklace, but fascinated by the money. She turned it over with her henna-tipped fingers, coin after coin, reckoning it up with a ludicrous gravity, her big lustrous eyes eagerly sparkling. It did not quite seem to satisfy her, so I added a few piastres more, at which she put down her baby and counted afresh—one *kamsa*, two *kamsas*, three *kamsas*, and so on. The bait was too tempting; but, just as she was complying, I thought I should have lost my fish. She had torn off the necklace, and was about

* “For the land whither thou goest is not as the land of Egypt, where thou sowdest thy seed and wateredst it with thy foot as a garden of herbs” (Deut. ix. 9).

delivering it up, when her heart misgave her. The battle between conflicting temptations, sorely fought, was as ingeniously laid open to view. She was actually beginning to sob. Indeed I almost felt guilty, and was wishing myself away, when just then her husband (or father) came up.

I suppose there could be no question that what I offered was ample pay, for the gentleman immediately took my part. He was quite enthusiastic about the money. He argued very forcibly that several necklaces might be bought with it: that, in fact, a handful of kamassas was a very great sum, not to be refused. A deal of persuasive whispering went on, and eventually, but reluctantly, the lady gave way, and I went off with her jewels. It was on this very necklace that I found, intermingled with modern fripperies, two scarabaei and several porcelain amulets of old Egypt, that might have been handled by some Israelitish woman ere her people fled down the river at the call of Moses. On a similar necklace I found a playing die, like, in form and numbering, to our modern dice. It belonged—so I have been told—to the Roman period B.C.

How did the old patriarchs reckon their hours? Not, I imagine, in a more primitive way than that still practised here. A dark, good-humoured, brawny-limbed fellow, with a short petticoat round his loins, expostulated with me one day for stumbling over a stick. I had kicked it away—a stick about a foot long, ran into the ground. This was a dial—so he endeavoured to explain, for I had no notion of my offence—a dial to divide the day. He worked at his water-bucket according as the shadows went round; he gained so many piastres for so much shadow, and I, by my awkwardness, had spoiled his reckoning. I saw the mischief I had done, and, perceiving that the noon point was marked, "I'll make it all right for you, old fellow," said I—for happily I had a compass in my pocket.

So I set to work, and my friend looked on. But the compass soon dissipated all thought of the dial. "Was there ever such a wonderful phenomenon? What made the needle always walk back to the same place? Wallah! Billah! The thing was alive!" And he got down on his knees and crept warily round it as though it were a vicious animal that would bite. More: he started up and called his fellows to see, who left their shadoof buckets dripping idly in the sluice, and came, but were equally at a loss with himself to comprehend the mystery. Of course they wanted backsheesh, and in return I asked one of them if he would clamber up a Doum palm-tree hard by, and gather for me a bunch of fruit that hung temptingly among the broad, fan-like leaves far above my reach. He did not climb, but literally *walked* up the tree, hand and foot, monkey-fashion, with his body bent outwards in the form of the letter V. It was as neatly done as though such gymnastics had tallied with the general fitness of things, as though it had been the man's natural employment to walk up trees.

Full royally we glided into the waters of Syene; with the sound of music—cymbals, darabouka, double pipes—we passed in. Our Arabs were in high glee, in a circle on deck, celebrating the occasion with a song. The western sun—obsequiously lackeyed by a phalanx of soft fleecy clouds, rosy as the angel clouds of Perugino—hung golden above the yellow desert, and flushed our big bellying sail on the river with his beams. Rounding some fantastic rockery—cliff piled on cliff—we came suddenly into view of the Gates of the Cataract. "Assoan!" shouted our turbaned captain, starting up with his darabouka. "Assoan!" echoed his animated crew. There before us stood the two confronting promon-

tories of granite, where the Nile, stilled from its late strife, passes placidly between, and flows onwards into Egypt. There were the emerald borders of Elephanta, laved by the glassy tide, and vistas of summer glory opening up amid its terraces and groves. Assoan, a little village low among the palms, lay on the eastern shore. We steered for it, and seeing that already several travellers' boats were anchored there, waiting their turn to be tugged up the rapids, we took our rank beside them and drove in the stake.

This then was Syene, whither Juvenal was banished, the utmost verge of Egypt, the limit of the wanderings of Herodotus, the limit also of the curse uttered by Ezekiel (Ez. xxix. 10).

THE CROW'S NEST, AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

OUR readers may recollect descriptions which were given some years ago in the papers, of a notorious district called "The Potteries." Although in the court suburb of Kensington, the filth, squalor, and disease of this district exceeded anything in St. Giles's or the east end of London.

Miserable as was the physical state of the place, the moral state was, if possible, still worse. To use the words of one who well knew it,* "the most flourishing religion was Mormonism, and drunkenness was almost the universal practice." "Sundays were the principal days for fighting, drinking, and gambling; children with bare feet and matted hair were running about in the miry or dusty thoroughfare," and any attempt to speak to them of better things was met with mockery.

In such a district, some good and benevolent persons began the work of reclamation. The first thing established was a Girls' Ragged School, and the next was a Mothers' Meeting, originated and conducted by Mrs. Bayley; a lady whose labours have since become well known, and are most interestingly described in her book, "Ragged Homes, and How to Mend Them."

Beginning with the women and children, the work gradually extended to the men. Mrs. Wightman's book, entitled "Haste to the Rescue," came into the hands of the missionary, and made a deep impression on his mind. He resolved to begin to work in the manner she suggested, and to endeavour to begin, as she had done, a "public-house without the drink," where working men might enjoy cheerful society and friendly intercourse, without the debasing accompaniments of the public-house. He says there is true philosophy in the plan of gathering together a few men of the same class, adding man to man as the truth grows and strengthens within them. He selected twelve men, and invited them, personally and by cards, to a room in the district, where a bright fire was burning, and coffee and buns were prepared for them. He there explained to them his plans for their benefit, into which they entered heartily. They were invited to meet again the following week, and each to bring a friend. Week by week the little party increased in numbers. From the place of meeting being on the upper floor, it received the name of the "Crow's Nest."

Captain and Mrs. Bayley had, from the first, earnestly laboured in the good work. The men were all encouraged to take an active part in the cause. A brick-maker volunteered to be secretary, a sawyer was made

* Mr. Parfitt, the missionary of the district, from whose manuscript journal we have been permitted to make extracts.

librarian. The room soon became too small for the company, and one evening in the week was not frequent enough for their meetings. It was proposed by one of the men to have meetings on Sunday evenings for prayer, and much good resulted from them.

The work was carried on quietly; no public meeting was called, no lectures of any kind introduced; no bills printed with a long list of patrons. Too often, when a large number of men, differing in their characters and opinions, have been thus hastily called together and formed into a club, discussions have arisen, and the project has failed; but, by beginning slowly, and collecting together a small band, united in their operations, the work has acquired greater solidity, on account of its slower growth. It must, however, be stated that occasionally a public meeting has been the means of bringing together the men most suited to the work.

From the little weekly meeting in the "Crow's Nest" a larger association arose. Two houses were purchased for the price of £900, and many working men aided in fitting them up. The building was completed in March 1861; £200 were spent in furniture and fittings. Everything was provided for the comfort of the men. Besides the basement, there was a bar with a gas apparatus for keeping coffee always ready, and also a coffee-room, furnished with draughts, chess, and bagatelle boards. A reading and a smoking-room were on the ground-floor; on the first floor were lecture and committee rooms, and over these a large room for more private meetings, with dormitories for the manager and his family. In deference to a book just published by Mrs. Bayley, it was called the "Workmen's Hall;" it was publicly opened by the Bishop of London, with an earnest and impressive address. A passage in his speech was thus reported by one of the working men among the listeners.

The Bishop said—"I want you working men to think of the three best things that a man can have in the world: first, good health; second, a good conscience; third, out of debt. Get these three things, and they will carry you through the world right." "I began to think," says this working man, giving an account of his own experience, "how am I to get hold of these three things? Can I have them with drink? Why, drink has robbed me of them all my life! I now resolved to abstain from it for the future. My mother came to London about this time, and she, good Christian—like almost everybody else—tried to persuade me not to leave it off altogether. She said I was her only son—and I warn't as big as other men—and she should lose me in less than twelve months. 'Only take a little, Bill,' she said, 'and be moderate.' I looked at myself, and then at my wife and family, and thought, if I don't give up drinking, I shall lose my soul; and if I die, my children will be fatherless. When I weighed the two things in the balance, I thought, live or die, I will seek to save my soul; and I resolved then never to drink again. Working hard in the brickfield, when I came home at night, it was amusing how—when I had washed myself—I went and looked in the glass to see if there was a shade of difference in me; but I found that there was just as much flesh on my cheeks, and my hair growed all the same, and I was better in every respect. I did not feel that languid feeling at night that I used to feel, and I was in a better condition for my work in the morning. Some months passed away, and I was led to the conclusion that my mother's fear was all a mistake. I continued to attend the meeting at the Workmen's Hall, and here I constantly met with Christian men who strengthened me in my resolution.

When I had fairly proved that I could live better up to the good rules of the Bishop, I began to tell others of the benefits of the new plan." This man had been educated at a Sunday school, but had fallen into drinking habits from the example, and on account of the ridicule of his companions in the brickfield. He had again and again repented, and again and again relapsed—which he attributes, in a great measure, to being compelled to go to a public-house to receive his pay. He says, "I found it very difficult to amend; for I had often nowhere to go to but to a public-house, to eat my dinner, or to get out of the rain, so my heart fainted, and I broke down—but not for long; for the men from the Workmen's Hall were after me, and said, 'Come, try again!'"

Try again he did, and with great success. He is now a *colporteur*, and for some time past has sold as much as four pounds' worth of books in a week. He says, "I now see piles of books—some of them handsomely bound—that I have supplied, and as I go round I try to tell my customers about the love of Christ."

This is far from being a solitary instance of the benefits resulting from attendance at the Workmen's Hall. The pages of Mr. Parfitt's diary are replete with anecdotes of men rescued from a state of the lowest degradation. One man in particular, although naturally kind and gentle, had been rendered so cruel and ferocious by drink that he had repeatedly beaten his wife, and locked her out of doors at night. With bitter tears she compared her condition and that of her children with her once happy home in her godly parents' house. "My constant cry was," she said, "that God would change my husband's heart, and deliver us from the cruel bondage we suffered." God heard her prayer, and disposed the man's heart to amend his ways. He now frequents the Workmen's Hall instead of the public-house; he has become renewed in the spirit of his mind, and he now may be seen sitting by his wife in the house of God, both of them well and comfortably dressed.

Another man, a tailor by trade, calls himself "the prodigal son." His parents were pious people in the country. He was a Sunday scholar, and a teacher, but after he came to London he fell into the pit of intemperance. He says that he has walked about Regent Street without soles to his boots, and has slept on doorsteps when he could earn £3 a week. He now blesses God that he was led into this neighbourhood and induced to become a member of the Workmen's Hall. He has now taken his place again in the house of God and at the Lord's table. He is a district visitor, and has established a Penny Bank, in which there are 189 depositors. In one of his reports he says, "The people look out for me with my tracts as they do for the milkman."

The story of another member of this club reads like a romance. He was left by a drunken mother on a doorstep when an infant, and was picked up and adopted by a carrier, who brought him up. At sixteen years of age he chanced to meet his sister, and for the first time discovered his own name. By this means he came into the possession of money to the amount of £90. But alas! before this time he had learned to drink. The money lasted him but six months, and his notorious dissipation caused him to obtain the title of "Jemmy the devil." He was first led to see the evil of his ways at a great meeting held at Dyrham Park, by Captain Trotter. His struggles were great, and he often fell, but to rise again. He became a member of the Workmen's Hall, and so was greatly aided and encouraged in his efforts to amend his ways. He is a district visitor

for the Hall. His comfortable whitewashed cottage is in the middle of his district. By his kindness and Christian conduct he has obtained great influence over his neighbours.

Meetings were occasionally held in the Workmen's Hall, where those who had been benefited by it stated their own experiences. We quote from one of these speeches. One man said: "I am the happiest man here to-night. It wasn't always so. I stand before you a reclaimed drunkard. There are many here that knew me when I had a devil's heart, but I have to bless the ladies and gentlemen who built the Workmen's Hall for us. . . . At one time I made my home very uncomfortable, but I do hope I shall never fall back again, for I have a happy home now. Every Sabbath morning me and my old woman gets out the good book and has a read, and then we kneel down and pray, and if any one comes to see us they must do the same."

Many pages might be filled with similar anecdotes from Mr. Parfitt's diary.

The entire cost of the building for the Workmen's Hall was £1300. When complete, it afforded opportunities for the meeting of a Working Men's Lecture Society, a Mutual Benefit Society, a Clothing Club, etc. On the basement floor there were hot and cold baths at low rates. Mrs. Bayley gave an account of the Workmen's Hall in a paper read at the meeting of the Social Science Association in 1862, in which she states that many of the men now members of the Workmen's Hall have confessed to having for years been in the habit of spending from £1 to £3 per week in drink, some having even exceeded this. Without reckoning for time saved and property not destroyed, it is calculated that the actual money rescued from drink by this Society amounted in one year to £15,600. The money thus saved has been spent in procuring domestic comforts and conveniences. The testimony of the city missionary, the doctor, and even the tailor of the district, is brought forward to prove the prosperity and happiness which is spreading round this little centre of social improvement.*

During the great money panic, chiefly caused by the failure of Overend, Gurney, and Co., the money lent on mortgage on the Workmen's Hall was suddenly called in, and in consequence of this the building was obliged to be sold. But this unfortunate circumstance seemed only to urge the men to fresh exertions. A new site has been obtained, and it is expected that the new premises will be still more convenient and commodious than the old.

DISILLUSION;

OR, MARY OF THE MILL AND THE COUNTESS MARIA.
FROM THE GERMAN OF OTILIE WILDERMUTH.

CHAPTER I.

From time immemorial a kind of romantic charm has rested on water-mills, owing, in a great degree, to their situation. Far away from the dreary rows of houses in the towns, and from the mud of the villages, they stand on the banks of rushing streams or lonely brooks, amidst alder and willow bushes. And they may well awaken in a lively imagination all those lovely and sorrowful pictures of beautiful millers' daughters, faithful miller lads, and rushing mill-streams, which constitute a complete mill literature.

It is certainly more prudent for poetic minds to take

up their position on the green bank, at a respectful distance from the mill, and to watch the water-works and waves; for the inhabitants themselves, and their life and work, would not very well suit the charming idyll which the picturesque appearance of the mill has here and there called forth; although, perhaps, some poetic feeling may be awakened in the inhabitants of the mill themselves, by their isolated and beautiful situation.

The Bush Mill, situated in some region of happy Suabia, combined prose and poetry in itself. The front did not offer the slightest food for a romantic imagination. It presented to view the convenient, useful side which makes mills an enviable possession in the eyes of the people; so much so, that, in the times of the first Napoleon's glory, a peasant once remarked, "Were I Napoleon, I should save up my money and buy a mill;" which, by the way, Napoleon might well have done himself.

In front, then, was a rough road, leading from the adjacent village and the more distant town to the mill-yard, in the midst of which stood a towering dunghill, the envy of all farmers. A flock of snow-white geese gabbled there, and a troop of fat ducks waddled about, and fed on the nourishing mill-dust; the strong horses and lively foals neighed in the stall, and the high-bred sows, the pride of the miller, grunted in their low dwellings. The miller was specially famous in the purchasing and fattening of his pigs. One day, as he went to market, the wife of the neighbouring farmer accosted him thus:—

"Neighbour, if you see a pretty little pig at the market, think of me."

All that was good useful prose, not to be despised in our hard times, but by no means exciting in mill romances.

But if you went up the dusty steps, through the great common room, where the work-people and the regular customers sat on wooden benches by the well-cleaned tables, and were served according to their rank and standing, you would pass through this room to the smaller dwelling-room; then, and not till then, the poetic side of the Mill would reveal itself.

The view was not extensive; but the brook rushed wildly and merrily by, and the mill-wheel went round close under the windows; so that the floor of the room had a perpetual pleasant trembling motion, like a ship sailing on the high seas. A high foot-bridge led over the stream to a small wooded island, always bright with the freshest green. Below, a soft meadow-land sloped downwards to the stream, bordered by a melancholy wood. The scene was fitted for rest, if not for enjoyment to the eye, while the rushing of the water and the mill-wheel was no inharmonious accompaniment to its deep stillness.

This state and company room of the house was not very symmetrical in its arrangement. The miller was fond of auctions, and brought home some fresh piece of furniture from every expedition to the town, to his wife's secret alarm. Consequently, sofa and chairs bore not the slightest relation to each other. The clock, on which lay a sleeping Cupid, deprived by lapse of time of the feet on which it rested, and the oval mirror in its gilt frame, had once belonged to a noble lady. On the wall hung a brilliantly-coloured picture of Duke Ulrich of Würtemberg, in perpetual conflict with a dragoon in blue uniform; and, next to it, some well-meant but very ugly lithographic prints from the history of the Reformation, and a beautiful "Africaine" and "Americaine," whose light and very scanty clothing was a perpetual thorn in the eyes of the miller's wife. But yet the room

* "Transactions of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, 1862," p. 528.

was comfortable, for it was clean and in good order, even though no symmetry was possible amidst the various pieces of furniture. When the miller's wife spread the beautiful red-and-white woven tablecloth over the old table, and laid out upon it the great coffee-pot and the delicious cream, in the white porcelain tea-service, and added to these a butter-cake of her own baking, the guests sat down comfortably and happily on the chairs of varied device, and never missed the lack of more elegant furniture.

Guests were not frequent in the Mill, with the exception of the customers, who were daily entertained in the house, but seldom entered into any nearer relation with the family. The miller's wife belonged to the race of quiet people. She enjoyed nothing more than a peaceful Sunday afternoon, when she could sit in her great room and refresh her mind with Arndt, and Bogatzky, and Rieger's sermons. She had been born on the Mill, and had never been more than nine miles away from it. The miller had seen a good deal of the world. He was the son of a wood-merchant in the Black Forest, and in his youth had often travelled as far as Holland with his planks. A very hard and cold winter had once detained him and his raft for weeks in the neighbourhood of the Bush Mill. Whether the wish to stay there always, arose from the sight of the miller's daughter's soft eyes, or from the modest consideration that the Mill would be a safe and lucrative possession, far better than the wood trade, varied by constant disputes with companions, we will leave undiscussed, in consideration of our sentimental readers. Suffice it to say, that the miller's daughter consented to give her hand to the craftsman, and the bond, formed in ice, proved well-tried and lasting in the sunshine. The miller, who was of a lively and often noisy nature, left his wife to pursue her own quiet course; and when the comrades whom he met here and there on business journeys rallied him on having a pietist at home, he said, "Let her alone; she suits me, even were she ten times as pious as she is. Everything is in order at home, and done as it should be, and there is no noise with the servants; so I can leave her to amuse herself with her prayer-books and meditations." He himself went on in his merry and rather wild fashion, and his wife never reproached him; but gradually he learnt to fear those quiet eyes, which looked so softly and sadly at him when he came home after taking rather too much. By degrees he began to like the Sundays, when, in the bright golden morning, he and his wife walked up through the green meadows, and between the high corn-fields, to the village church; and she, on her part, gave up the Sunday afternoon to him, and went with him in the blue-painted chaise to pay visits to their friends; or sometimes they stayed at home to receive company. So the two always grew in each other's affections, and the miller often thought how good and clever his wife was, not although, but because, she was pious. His wild comrades gradually disappeared of themselves; the miller's wife chiefly confined herself to intercourse with her quiet friends in the village, and a constant and friendly communication was kept up between them and their friends at the Firs.

The wife of Farmer Rau, although a cousin of the miller's wife, seemed to regard it as a kind of condescension to have any intercourse on an equal footing with her. Her father had, indeed, only been a labourer at the Firs. But after his death she had paid a visit to some relations in Switzerland, and yet knew a few grand phrases from those parts. Her husband had studied for some time at Hohenheim, and wore a moustache. He

had pulled down the old farmhouse and built it up afresh. She dressed herself according to the fashion of the day, while the miller's wife retained her respectable dark peasant's dress. But the miller's wife had always proved a true and helpful friend in word and deed. Farmer Rau was of a rather phlegmatic nature, and was very glad to receive practical support from the miller, and to profit largely from his experience in matters of which he had learnt nothing at Hohenheim. In fact, they liked each other, and for many years had lived together through joy and sorrow. There are human friendships which appear to be deeply rooted, but from which the soul has departed, almost without the knowledge of those concerned; but there are other friendships which draw the hearts of those concerned more closely together, though they seem to be the result of accident. The miller gave himself up freely and gladly to his friend. His wife did not seek anything, but took all that circumstances brought in her way; made the best of it, and held it fast with all the fidelity of her nature.

The miller and his wife had established their household a few years earlier than the Raus, but the first christening was celebrated at the Firs. The miller and his wife were sponsors, and the baby was named George, after his godfather; Hansjörg, which was really the miller's name, was given to him. After this, Frau Rau had a little girl, and twins, all of whom died quite young. Two years after the birth of little George, the Mill boy came, dressed in his best, to the Firs, and brought an invitation to the christening of a little girl who had been born in the Mill.

The miller was determined to institute such a christening as had never been seen before in the neighbourhood. While the procession went to church, a succession of loud shots were fired, so that the nerves of the child might be hardened for its whole life. Mill boys and servants, old and new customers, whoever chose to come to the Mill, were so richly feasted on roast meat and wine that they preserved the remembrance of it all their life long. Coffee-pots, and great pieces of butter-cake, were sent out through the whole village; even a company of tinkers and basket-makers, who had encamped under the nut-tree, sent an embassy to ask for some of the remains of the feast, and received their share.

The miller, at his wife's special request, had limited the guests in the reception-room to a small and select company—the Raus, who were to be sponsors; the clergyman, who at least would drink a cup of coffee with them; the schoolmaster and his wife; and a cousin of the miller's wife, who was spending her widowhood among the quiet "brethren" at K——. The miller had a secret fear lest this cousin should make his wife still more pious; but he could not refuse her anything on the christening-day.

Little George, from the Firs, a fine little lad, who, to the admiration of all around, trotted about on his own feet, had come with his parents. He had on a little velvet coat and an extraordinary turban head-dress, looking like a young prince in his mother's eyes, but like a little monkey in the eyes of the miller's wife. He paid little attention to the baby, but so much the more to the tarts and sweetmeats on the table. At last he began to cry; but the servant-maid took him out to see the fowls and pigs in the yard, and brought about a beneficial pause. When he returned, refreshed from his expedition, the baby was shown to him as a special treat; and just at that moment it awoke, and stretched out its pretty little hands. "It is alive!" he cried, in the highest astonishment, and he even dared to stroke its little warm soft cheek.

"Those two would make a pretty pair," remarked the schoolmaster's wife, smiling.

"That is very true," cried the miller, excited with wine and paternal joy; "they would just suit each other. What do you say, godfather?"

"Why not? I know of nothing against it," said Rau, and shook his friend's offered hand.

"So let it be, then," cried the miller. "It is decided, Frau Rau. Let us drink the health of your George and our Mary. You ladies have nothing to say against it?"

"Nothing at all," said Frau Rau, politely, secretly thinking that it would never come to pass. "You have the means to give your daughter a good education."

"I intend to do so," answered the miller. "She shall learn Spanish and Turkish, if it is necessary. Let us hope all to meet together at the wedding. Wife, you do not talk at all. What do you say to it?"

"I consent, in God's name, if it is His will," answered the miller's wife, and raised her glass.

The health of the bridal pair was now merrily drunk, and their future was discussed. Many instances were brought forward of marriages thus early arranged, which had turned out happily at last. The miller's wife and her cousin silently looked out passages in the text-book; the young bridegroom ungallantly cried to go home; the little bride slept, and slept on all through the evening and the night.

NEGRO SELF-HELP.

In a recent number of the "Leisure Hour" we gave some particulars respecting the condition of the negroes in some of the remoter districts of the Southern States of America. That these referred to extreme cases might be apparent to many, and we are glad to present some details of a more pleasing and encouraging kind, showing the earnest anxiety of the freedmen to raise themselves out of their long ignorance and degradation.

We learn that already, in the State of Tennessee, the negroes are dispensing with the generous aid proffered by their white brethren in the North and in Great Britain, and are taking upon their own shoulders the burthen of educating their children. In this State alone they have now erected thirty schools, which they are maintaining independently of white assistance. Last January these negroes of Tennessee raised nearly a thousand dollars amongst themselves for the current expenses of education.

In a letter just received from a well-known American philanthropist it is stated:—"The blacks are *doing well*, as is admitted in all directions. Tennessee will take our schools off our hands, and thus enable us to put an additional force into other States where there is more destitution. We have proved to the world that freedmen's schools are food, raiment, family organization, and general comfort to the black man, and industrial advancement, social order, and better corn and more cotton to the white man."

So zealous are the young darkies in their desire for instruction, that many of them walk four, five, or six miles to school, and back again daily. During the very inclement weather of the last winter they perseveringly attended the schools, and, in some instances, it was observed that their bare feet left marks of blood on the snow-covered paths. At one school for adults and youths, out of eighty-five pupils, seventy (previously quite ignorant) learnt to read in two months.

These efforts at self-help are rapidly obtaining favourable recognition from the whites. Thus, a black man

has just been appointed one of the first-class clerks in the Treasury at Washington. Another black has been recommended to the office of postmaster by the brother of ex-president Jefferson Davis. This negro has already discharged for six years a postmaster's duties, whilst a white man has nominally held the office and received the chief part of the remuneration.

Many of these instructed negro youths are evincing an earnest desire to become missionaries to Africa, the land of their fathers. Probably, in a few years, the way will open for extensive missionary labours by these amongst their distant kinsmen. In some instances circumstances have already opened the way for a commencement.

The progress thus made by the freedmen has been owing, under God, to the indefatigable exertions of several philanthropic associations in the Northern States and in Great Britain. Of these the principal is the National Freedmen's Aid Union, in this country, which numbers amongst its patrons the Duke of Argyle, Lord Shaftesbury, and Lord Brougham. By persevering vigorous appeals that Association has raised scores of thousands of pounds to enable the freedmen to start well in their efforts for self-improvement. Many hundred bales of clothing and books have also been forwarded by the Union. Many a poor dying consumptive has been supplied with blankets from this source. And the little bare-footed scholars have had shoes provided for them in many instances.

Recently, however, a sore discouragement has arisen, which renders further aid indispensable. This is famine, and failure of the crops throughout a large portion of the Southern States. The intense heat of last summer in that region, where no rain fell for three months, scorched the leaves of almost every tree, and destroyed an immense quantity of vegetable produce. To make matters worse, the ensuing winter was a season of deluging rains, which flooded the land in all directions, and swept away houses, cattle, and fences. This visitation coming after the long drought, and in a region already devastated by four years' warfare, has produced an awful amount of destitution, and many poor creatures, both white and black, are starving in consequence.

The past winter and spring have witnessed awful scenes in the "Burnt District." Some families, in their extreme suffering with cold, burnt up their scanty furniture—even their very bedsteads. One poor old woman, after thus consuming everything, began to take up the floor of her hovel; and, while putting it upon the fire, she says this text came into her mind: "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." She then sat down with praises to God for the comforts derived from his holy Gospel.

The inhabitants of the Northern States are aiding nobly in the work of charity to the sufferers; but the need is so urgent and so wide-spread that British contributions are being earnestly invited also. The region which has thus suffered is now called the "Burnt District." It extends 700 miles through northern Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia, to the Carolinas, and is nearly 200 miles in breadth. When Ireland and Lancashire suffered from famine, the Americans sent over many shiploads of corn and bacon, and altogether contributed nearly £250,000 to our hunger-stricken countrymen. Now, therefore, is the time to reciprocate these Christian good offices.

[Any contribution in aid will be gladly received at the office of the Freedmen's Aid Union, 12, Bishopsgate Street Without, London, E.C., whence it will be promptly forwarded to its destination.]

Varieties.

THE LATE PRINCE CONSORT.—The Prince was a man of many pursuits and of various accomplishments, with an ardent admiration for the beautiful both in nature and in art. Gradually, however, he gave up pursuits that he was fond of, such as the cultivation of music and drawing; not that he relished these pursuits less than heretofore, but that he felt that it was incumbent upon him to attend more and more to business—he was not to employ himself upon what specially delighted him, but to attend to what it was his duty to attend to; and there was not time for both. There was another very rare quality to be noticed in the Prince—that he had the greatest delight in anybody else saying a fine saying or doing a great deed. He would rejoice over it, and talk about it for days; and, whether it was a thing nobly said or done by a little child or by a veteran statesman, it gave him equal pleasure. He delighted in humanity doing well on any occasion and in any manner. Throughout his career, the Prince was one of those who threw his life into other people's lives, and lived in them; and never was there an instance of more unselfish and chivalrous devotion than that of his to his Consort-Sovereign, and to his adopted country. That her Majesty might be great and glorious, that his adopted country might exceed in art, in science, in literature, and what was dearer still to him, in social well-being, formed ever his love, hope, and aim, and he would have been contented to have been very obscure if those high aims and objects could, in the least degree, have thereby been furthered and secured. His love of his adopted country did not prevent his being exceedingly attached to his birth-place and his native country. He would recur in the most touching manner and with joy to all the reminiscences of his happy childhood; but, indeed, it is clear that, throughout his life, he became in a certain measure attached to every place where he dwelt. This is natural, as he always sought to improve the people and the place where he lived, and inevitably he became attached to it and to them. It is very difficult to describe a man's temperament, especially when it is of a somewhat complex nature, as was that of the Prince. It was a buoyant, joyous, happy temperament; it made his home and his household glad; to use a common expression, but a forcible one, he was "the life of the house."—*Lord William Lennox.*

POST-OFFICE SAVINGS-BANKS.—The annual statutable return relating to the Post-office savings-banks shows that the amount of deposits (with interest due thereon), which was £6,526,400 at the beginning of the year 1866, had increased to £8,121,174 at its close, an increase of £1,594,774, following upon an increase of nearly the same amount in the year 1865. Nearly £3,000,000 were withdrawn in the year 1866, and above £4,400,000 paid in.

INFLUENCE OF THE THEATRE.—To the dramatic treatment of history or of truth there is clearly no objection. Shakespeare's historical plays give, as is admitted on all sides, a better idea of English history than the old chroniclers. Parables well spoken or carefully penned are dramas; and all great teachers have used them. To the reading of dramas there can be no objection, provided we recognise certain conditions. Let the principal agents be virtuous, and the sentiments pure and noble; or, if they describe character or manners, the working of passion, in fact, as found in actual life, let them be truthful; and let them be read by those who are of an age to appreciate the thought, and who are not likely to receive mischief from the descriptions. Or, if they are dramas of wit and humour, intended for amusement and relaxation, then let them be read sparingly, and be made a relaxation and not a business. Even if they portray vice, they may be cautiously read, if they render it loathsome, and if the study is likely to help the reader to such knowledge of human nature as may fit him the better for real life. Subject to these conditions, the drama is, theoretically speaking, as harmless and as allowable as a novel, or a story, or a poem. But, as we have seen, many dramas are objectionable, and violate one or other of the four conditions we have ventured to prescribe. To dramas as acted, however—that is, to the theatre—there are serious objections. The company, the associations, the sensuousness of the whole scene, have most of them come to be mischievous; while the plays that are most popular are often questionable in character and lowering in tendency. Congreve, indeed, defended the theatre in this respect by defining comedy, after Aristotle, as "the imitation of what is worse in human nature."

But this remark, though a learned excuse for himself, is no plea for the stage. It is the opposite, and forms one ground of our censure. And even if, by chance, the theatre teaches great truths, it fails to impress them upon the mind. The accompaniments, as Johnson held, distract attention and weaken impression. Its best defence is that it is a recreation; and, it is added, it may be a harmless recreation. But even if particular plays be harmless, it would be much better to seek recreation in what is less sensuous, more helpful to the cultivation of true taste, less injurious to our youth, and free from the fearful risks which experience and history have shown to be connected with the stage. In all this reasoning we have purposely taken the lowest ground. No argument against the theatre has been advanced which may not be conceded on the ground of morality alone; and, in fact, every argument has been conceded by moralists, and even by playwrights. If the theatre be estimated from a religious point of view, from its tendency to promote or to hinder the tastes and aspirations of spiritual life, our judgment becomes much more decided. It is not that religion is a system of gloomy restrictions. The delights of friendship and society, the exercise of every faculty in the investigation of philosophy, in the study of literature, or in the cultivation of taste, all arts and all knowledge, are within the range of the enjoyments it allows. Nothing is forbidden but what is evil either in itself or in its influence. Nor is it that religion is not aided by whatever can adorn and refine. The most exquisite relish for the grace and beauty of life is so far from being opposed to exalted piety, that they tend, under proper regulations, to elevate and perfect one another. But, in fact, a really earnest, spiritual man has no taste for such enjoyment as the theatre presents. It affords him no relaxation or pleasure. And if, through the decay of piety, he does find enjoyment there, his whole tone of character is lowered, his consistency and power of usefulness are diminished, and at length the vigour and the influence of his spiritual life will be lost. Religious instincts are, in this case, a safe guide; and if men set them at nought, their violation will be followed by rapid deterioration and bitter experience.—*Angus's "Handbook of English Literature."*

RESCUED FROM DROWNING.—A man had fallen into a garden well, where he stood with the water up to his mouth; the bucket rope was too weak to support his weight and had twice broken; and a greater danger offered had he fallen when half way up. I desired him to fill the bucket, invert it, and get it under his feet. This kept his head and shoulders well above water. We then passed down pieces of brushwood which he also successively placed beneath him, occasionally strengthening his platform by pieces of hurdles and other timber lowered by the rope. Some of the party were set to work to cut a ditch from a fish pond about fifty yards distant, but at a higher level; the water was led to the well, and the man floated to the surface. He was then, by the shock to his nerves, almost insensible, but life was saved. This happened in America, at a house distant about three miles from any shop where a rope could have been procured.—*Sir Edward Belcher.*

ORGAN-GRINDERS.—The organ-grinders, as a class, are abstemious and well-conducted. They hardly ever touch strong drink; even malt liquor is strange to them. They hire their organs, and pay the larger part of their earnings to the lender. They cannot gain a penny until he is satisfied. A lady acquaintance, with a large small family, encouraged a grinder by giving him a penny every third or fourth day. At length he absented himself for a whole week, and then called without his organ to thank her for her kindness, and say that he had succeeded in filling his leather purse, and was about to return home. A friend once accompanied us to the grinders' domicile, in Leather Lane—a long, low-roofed shed, so surrounded by houses that the sun could hardly reach it. It was divided into two bare rooms; on the ground-floor they dined, each dipping his iron spoon, as he needed, in a large earthen pan, filled with herb soup, among which, if you looked narrowly, a few lumps of fat meat floated. This, with a hunch of coarse, brown bread, and a draught of water, constituted their chief meal. The upper floor was arranged as the dormitory, where a few trusses of clean straw represented both bedstead and bedding. Thus their board and lodging cost a sum so small that the poorest Irish labourer would have deemed it wholly inadequate.

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